



America@YourLibrary

Examples of American-German Library Relationships
in Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia

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Introduction

United States Post and Base Libraries in Germany

Examples of American-German Relations in the New German States

An idea is born – the library donation program

"Libraries that once served the intellectual, educational, and recreational needs of American soldiers and their families are now being made available to those who, for many years, were not allowed access to the ideas they contain. What better way to turn "swords into ploughshares" than by providing adversaries in printed form the common values and ideas that will hopefully bind us together in a new era of friendship and cooperation."

These concluding words of a speech given by the American ambassador Robert M. Kimmit perfectly describe the idea and basic concept underlying the extraordinary library donation program of the US government. Ambassador Kimmit gave this speech on April 9 1992, when he donated the contents of the U.S. army community library of Emery Barracks in Würzburg to the *Bibliothek der Thüringer Staatskanzlei* in Erfurt. This donation marked the start of the *Library Donation Program*, a very special American-German cooperative project. The program would have been unthinkable without the reunification treaty between the *German Democratic Republic* (GDR) and the *Federal Republic of Germany* (FRG) in 1990, which marked the end of the constitutional division between the two German states.

German reunification also marked the beginning of a departure of allied soldiers who had turned from defenders to partners and to friends over the years. Shortly after the fall of the Berlin wall, high-ranking and well-known American officers began to think of a way to maintain good relations with the German people, in which they wanted to include the new areas of Germany, the former GDR. That was when the *United States Information Service* (USIS) realized that the impending reduction of US forces, who had helped to secure peace in the previous decades, could offer an excellent opportunity to transmit American values and ideals to a newer and broader public.

USIS officials recognized that one of the best ways to close the information gap in a country that had been isolated from western contact for 45 years was to provide books from the United States to the university and public libraries of the new German states. By transferring their collections to libraries in the former GDR, the U.S. military would leave behind a legacy to help influence the ideas and impressions of entire generations to come. Thus, in the early 1990s, thousands of American books from former libraries which served army post and air force bases were given to libraries in the new regions of Germany.

In early October 1990, the country library director of USIS Germany, Susan B. Aramayo, wrote a letter to the director of libraries of the European Command Headquarters (USAEUR), Louise LeTendre. In it, Aramayo presented USIS's case for American post and base libraries to remain in Germany. She was convinced that, with the withdrawal of the first US forces in Germany, the future fate of these libraries had to be planned. This thought gave birth to the idea of donating these American public libraries, which had been used by soldiers and their families in the past years, to the new German regions. Soon after this initial letter the *Library Donation Program* was founded. This program organized the donation of books from closed post and base libraries to East German universities and public libraries.

USIS Germany (through agreements with the United States Army, the United States Air Force, and the U.S. Library of Congress) located appropriate recipient institutions in the new states and made arrangements to transfer entire library collections as they became available. The U.S. Army Europe commander, General Crosbie E. Saint, approved this arrangement.

The idea becomes reality – relocations and new openings

Each one of these collections – no matter what size – had been a complete public library. They contained up-to-date reference collections – including multiple sets of encyclopaedias and atlases – as well as comprehensive works on history, economics, political science and geography. Literary works, modern fiction, books on American art and music, and biographies also were a strong component of each collection. In some instances, the libraries also included children's books. In addition, there were also research papers and documents as well as information about American studies and universities, since many post and base libraries had supported university programs for American military and civil employees. Often the collections had been expertly built over years and it would have cost thousands of dollars to create them from scratch. The card catalogues were also donated. Once the books were unpacked and shelved in proper order, the library was immediately ready to be used by the public. The libraries were sent to their new owners free of charge, and quite frequently the library furniture (shelves, tables, chairs and cupboards) was donated as well.

The official donation ceremonies included a reception for representatives of the State Department, the United States Army, USIS, and representatives of various communities and organizations, as well as members of the media. The first donation ceremony was conducted in April 1991 during the Leipzig Book Fair when the collection from the *Hessisch Oldendorf Air Force Community Library* was donated to the public library of Leipzig.

Two months later, the American ambassador, Vernon Walters, travelled to Dresden to present 20,000 volumes from the former *Zweibrücken Air Force Community Library* to the *Sächsische Landesbibliothek*: The trucks with the books arrived right on time for the reception celebration. Since then, nine additional U.S. libraries have been transferred, totalling over 116,000 volumes and ranging in size from 3,500 volumes to 35,000 volumes.

As a part of the *Library Donation Program*, Ambassador Robert M. Kimmit donated libraries to New Brandenburg, Halle, Magdeburg and Frankfurt / Oder. In January 1992, Kimmit travelled to Neubrandenburg to give 15,000 volumes from the *Coleman Barracks Army Community Library Gelnhausen* to the regional library. On occasion of this donation, library employees decorated the library with representative volumes of American literature, encyclopaedias and art books.

In March 1992, a library was given to the university and regional library of Sachsen-Anhalt in Halle. On this occasion, the former German minister of foreign affairs, Dietrich Genscher - who is originally from Halle - was present as well. Eight months later, the city library of Schwerin celebrated receiving its own library donation together with U.S. Army Europe Commander General David M. Maddox. In April of the next year, the municipal library in Altglienicke (Berlin) received another book donation, this time in the presence of Colonel Alfred W. Baker. A month later, Ambassador Kimmit gave a library collection to the Europe university Viadrina in Frankfurt / Oder.

Thus the closure of military bases in the West and the South of Germany resulted in a proof of lasting peace: 31 libraries of former military bases were given to cities and institutions in the new German states. The donation of these book collections to Germany symbolizes a heritage of the American army, a heritage that will influence and perhaps even change the opinions and impressions of future generations. In the words of envoy Douglas Jones during his speech to the Anhaltische Landesbücherei Dessau: *"This is the beginning of a process of close contacts and ties with the people in the new states. This process will lead to understanding and real friendship"*.

American libraries set new trends in their new surroundings

More than ten years after the birth of the *Library Donation Program* this goal has become reality. Today, the American libraries provide information services and study guides for everyone who is interested in the US or the English language, especially students from schools and universities. The librarians are able to react quickly to various requests, actively using all the media, books and magazines. Additionally, they offer programs and seminars on the USA, for example special days for school students and their English teachers, or for university students and their professors. Furthermore, the American libraries offer seminars on current affairs.

Regular highlights include the visits of native speakers: American students, for example, talk about their home country, their schools or universities. On other occasions the libraries invite American authors to talk about their novels. Sometimes, the German librarians meet with American library experts to have special talks: the donation of the American post and base libraries became the starting point in a series of meetings and new relations which mark the introduction of "American style" libraries in Germany. The American Embassy in Bonn (now Berlin) and the American Consulate General Leipzig have always been eager to stay in contact with American and German librarians, and they continually support their work. One example of a special program is the so-called "Voluntary Visitor Program", which is organized in the USA. Through this program, German librarians are invited to the US to give them first hand information about library systems and everyday work in American libraries, and to provide them with new ideas for their work at home. The German participants are also able to acquire even more book donations for their libraries. One popular gift is the *Library of America* series, a collection of real American classics from the canon of literature; books on the history and politics of the United States are also frequently given.

Libraries in the US underwent a more rapid change from traditional to modern, or even virtual, collections than their German counterparts. To make it possible for German staff to experience the rapid development in the worldwide library systems, they were given special workshops and courses at the American Embassy and Consulate General. These courses taught new strategies and possibilities in using internet, virtual book collections, and American online resources. The German librarians also learned about digital media collections, which have been produced both in the American Embassy in Berlin and in the US State Department, as well as other American sources of information. Two CD-ROMs that provide a broad mix of information on US issues and topics are "About the USA" and "Information USA". They are available free of charge in the Consulate General. A special aspect of the workshop, for both German and American librarians, was the impact of new people, opinions, and strategies as well as the exchange of personal know-how, in regards to special needs and problems of the American collections. These days, exchanges are organised through an informal network.

Today, the high hopes which characterized the introduction of American libraries to the former East German states have become reality. The book collections of former American army bases symbolize a fertile and stable foundation for American-German cooperation.

September 2004

I

The world's languages under one roof: The International Library in Chemnitz

Approximately 1800 foreign residents, about one third of the total in Chemnitz, are library users. This could be credited to the presence of the International Library, a section of the municipal library in Chemnitz. The International Library makes a considerable contribution to the integration of foreign citizens.

Founded in 1976 as the first international library in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the International Library Chemnitz intended to offer itself as a cultural resource to foreign workers in Chemnitz (formerly known as Karl-Marx-Stadt). The library soon developed an extensive collection. Of great importance to the development of the collection was a donation of 1,500 Russian books from a Soviet book exhibit. This donation, made in 1987, marked the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution. Additionally, in 1992, the U.S. Embassy's donation of 4,600 books coming from the library of the army base in Stuttgart, "Northpoint", further enhanced the collection of English language literature. Today, the International Library owns approximately 19,000 items in more than 35 languages — ranging from A (Arabic) to Z (Zulu). It is the most extensive collection of its kind in the new German states and includes foreign language literature (fiction, non-fiction, children's literature), language courses (with audio tapes, CDs, videos and CD-ROMs), dictionaries, books on tape, travel guides, language guides for travel, feature films, newspapers and magazines. In 2001, the International Library recorded 60,000 borrowings.

The International Library, in addition to providing books and other media, is partner to a variety of clubs, societies and institutions that deal with foreign languages and cultures. The International Library also cooperates with the French, British, U.S. and Russian cultural institutions. The International Library is well known not only in Chemnitz - it is widely acknowledged to initiate and organize various events and exhibits. In the past, the library has welcomed prominent guests such as Jewgeni Jewtuschenko (a Russian author and visiting professor at Tulsa and New York universities), Lili Brett (a native of Germany now living in New York), and Gerd Ruge (former correspondent for the ARD). In 2001, the head of the International Library, who was born in Leningrad, celebrated her 30th anniversary as a Librarian, and the 25th anniversary of the International Library. She considers the International Library to be not just her job, but also her life. Her commitment can be recognized by the large number of events and great number of visitors to the library. In 2001 alone, 1,568 visitors attended 34 readings, lectures, and

concerts.

Offering up-to-date media, information, contacts, foreign-language conversation, and many events, the International Library is an important part of the multicultural scene in Chemnitz. Recently, the municipal library and the International Library moved to the foreground of the city's cultural life in a physical manner: At the end of 2003, the library, the *Volkshochschule* (community college offering continuing education programs), the *Naturkundemuseum* (museum of natural history), and the *Neue Sächsische Galerie* (the New Saxonian Gallery) moved into a new building, the former department store Warenhaus Tietz.

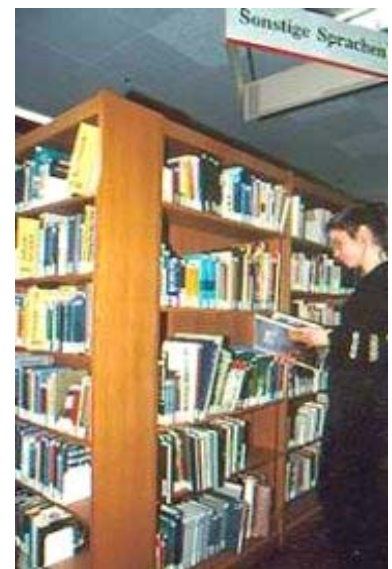
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II

Library from the U.S. military post at Schwäbisch-Gmünd travels through Saxony:

The Saxony State and University Library (SLUB) Dresden

In 1991, the U.S. military post Schwäbisch-Gmünd donated their library collection to the College of Education in Dresden (*Pädagogische Hochschule - (PH) - Dresden*). Some 10,000 volumes were delivered in boxes and put into a newly renovated room of the computing center at the College of Education. The library was installed and cataloged as a complete set. However, the collection did not stay in this location for long, because the room was soon claimed for other purposes. The books found a new home in a different part of the College of Education and were again made available to the students and visitors, for use on an hourly basis. Because there was little other English language literature available for the English teachers studying at the college, the books were frequently checked out.

In 1992, only one year later, the College of Education was integrated into Dresden's Technical University (*Technische Universität - (TU) - Dresden*), the same university which had founded a new department of linguistics and literature (*Fakultät für Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaften*), with an affiliated Institute of English and American Studies (*Institut für Anglistik/Amerikanistik*). The U.S. post collection was handed over to this department's library and stored in a compact shelving unit in the stacks. Visitors could, of course, continue to search the collection via the catalogs, as well as to check out the books.

The U.S. post library moves into the SLUB

In 1998, Dresden's Technical University Library for linguistics and literature and its other branches moved into a bigger building. The U.S. post collection, *American Library*, was again set up as a whole, this time in the general access area. Gradually, the books were screened and classified by subject specialists, and most of them were integrated into the holdings of Saxony's State and University Library (*Sächsische Landesbibliothek - Staats - und Universitätsbibliothek - SLUB*). In 2002, fifty-seven years after the destruction of the Saxon State Library (*Sächsische Landesbibliothek*), the new SLUB building was finished and is open to the public again. Here, one can find the largest part of the *American Library*. All publications are included in the SLUB's online catalog, WEBPAC. Parts of the collection have been integrated into other branches of the library.

Educational books, for instance, are filed in the corresponding section. Cookbooks also form part of that collection, available to the future schoolteachers of nutrition and domestic sciences (*Lehrstuhl für Ernährungs- und Haushaltswissenschaft*). The former U.S. post library of Schwäbisch-Gmünd has excellently served the students in Dresden for eleven years, from different locations. Now, in the new millennium, it has finally found its perfect spot.

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III

Troop Books inspire and enthuse: The City and Regional Library in Erfurt

In the year 1992 the strength of US troops in Germany was reduced, meaning that some of the army libraries were eliminated. Amongst the beneficiaries of this were the libraries in Germany's new federal states, since they received the leftover stock of books. One of the lucky recipients was the regional city library in Erfurt (*Stadt- und Regionalbibliothek Erfurt*), at the time still called *Wissenschaftliche Allgemeinbibliothek* (scientific general library), which received approximately 7,600 volumes from the *Daley U.S. Army Community Library Bad Kissingen* on the occasion of the event "Days of American Culture in Thuringia" in 1991. The collection comprised mainly classics, but also popular and scientific literature.

High demand for English literature

The staff of the library was very pleased with the new literature, which was catalogued and is available to the public. Since then, there has been a high demand, especially among students, trainees, and foreign citizens, who use English language literature extensively. Other users may read these books to improve on their English, or just for fun. Only through this donation was the library able to provide a significant section devoted to the English language, as there were no funds available for either the range or the volume of this collection.

The library's stocks range from novels and special essays to subject literature. Especially popular are works on history, natural science, art and literature, though biographies are another favourite. Within the library, the English literature is integrated in the German main body of the library. Volumes that concern one certain theme are all filed in one area, facilitating easy research. A common request is fiction in both the original English language and its German translation, for which the cataloguing system is also of great help. It is due to the donation that this extraordinary service of having the same book in two languages on the one shelf was made possible.

Today the regional city library in Erfurt offers more than 500,000 books, 250 magazine subscriptions, 6,000 sets of sheet music, 10,000 audiotapes, 12,000 records, 15,000 CDs, 3,000 CD-ROMs, 1,000 DVDs, 2,500 videos, and 1,000 board games. Furthermore, free Internet access is available to visitors. Every year, more than 750,000 users borrow almost 900,000 volumes.

Literature and brochures about the American way of life

Today, the American book stock is a frequently used component of the regional city library in Erfurt. The library employees are always eager to provide forward information about the former army library, especially to school students and trainees, in the course of library introductions and training courses, for which there is boundless enthusiasm. In order for the visitor to realise the full extent of the library's range, stands with thematic book recommendations or small literature compilations are arranged regularly.

In cooperation with the U.S. Consulate General in Leipzig it was possible to arrange an exhibit about the 1996 US presidential elections within the library rooms. Non-fiction literature from the USA was displayed, focusing mainly on politics, history, business, culture and travel. Brochures were laid out and supplemental flyers were arranged just for that occasion.

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IV

New insights into the American way of books: Europe - Library 'Bookworm' in Görlitz

Before the Europe-Library in Görlitz could celebrate its 5th anniversary in May 2001, it experienced a story full of emotions and changes. In 1995, the director of the Euro-Schools Organization (ESO) accepted without hesitation, when the library of the old US Information Service at the American military base in Baumholder was offered to her. 18,000 English books, newspapers, and records, as well as the whole collection of library furniture, found a new home in a beautiful Renaissance building on the market square in Görlitz. On May 5th, 1996, the Consul General of the American Consulate General Leipzig officially opened the library, called 'Bookworm', in its function as the central foreign language library. Because of the very special location of the city of Görlitz in the so-called "Dreiländereck" (three-countries-corner), the border triangle of Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic, the Europe-Library could be established in this region as a language- and community center.

Special English education for kids and adults

These days, the English language, its vocabulary and grammar, is provided and taught not only through English language books or magazines. There are also special CD-ROMs, internet terminals, and many special events for each age group, organized by the staff of the Europe-Library. Book presentations, exhibitions, language group meetings, language games for kindergarten and primary school students, support for English lessons in schools, continuing training for teachers as well as meetings between German, Polish and Czech teens and adults are all programs organized by the Europe-Library. The weekly 'Tea Time' (where coffee is offered, too!), is an informal conversation group in which participants can brush up their English skills free of charge. This 'Tea Time' was started by the librarians and was met with an extremely positive response. Another extremely popular event is the "American Day". The close co-operation with the staff of the American Consulate General Leipzig provides an intense insight into the American way of life in the Euro-region. One example of such special encounters is the discussion between American students and young people from Görlitz that take place in the Europe-Library.

This close involvement and special engagement by the 'Bookworm' staff, who are working on short-term contracts or sometimes even voluntarily, has given the Europe-Library such an outstanding position that the city-library Görlitz transferred all of its foreign language stock to them. For the 'Bookworm' library, this donation brought them one step closer to being a truly European library, since many other European foreign language titles are now on their shelves as well.

In 2001, the library moved from the "Brüderstraße" to the "Untermarkt", and the Europe-Library was able to celebrate its 5th anniversary in newer, brighter and larger rooms. The director of Euro-Schools proudly described the Europe-Library as a visible sign of the people's tolerance and eagerness to learn in this region. Representatives of the American embassy in Berlin promised further support. At that time the former Consul for Public Affairs at the U.S. Consulate General Leipzig underlined his wish for the future: *"The library will remain an active community center and like in previous years, when people from all ages and nationalities have met and filled the center with life, we will continue to be engaged and work together with you for that."*

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**American professors donate their books to German Students:
The Frank Freidel Memorial Library in Leipzig**

"*Book Gift to the University of Leipzig*" was the headline of the Leipziger Volkszeitung in July 1991, after the U.S. Embassy's cultural Attaché, Paul Smith, handed over 20,000 books from the U.S. military base in Ulm to the University's Albertina Library. Fiction in English language, encyclopaedias, and scientific literature, in which the stamps of the former owners remind of their origin, were all integrated into the library.

Private library of US historian Frank Freidel now located in Saxony

This first donation of books, which opened the bridge between Saxony and the US, was the most meaningful expansion of English language books in the history of the library up to that point. On May 14, 1997, the 'Frank Freidel Memorial Library' was opened as a special library for American studies. It offers original language books on the subjects of history, politics, and US culture, as well as fiction and literature.

In an initiative started by the Institute of American Studies of the Leipzig University, led by professor Hartmut Keil, the library's collection was made possible thanks to many hundreds of donations by US professors. The biggest donation, amounting to 4,500 books and magazines, was gained from the private library of the late American historian Frank Freidel. The project was supported by the director of the Amerika Haus Leipzig, who enabled the founding of an 'American style' library through a library fellowship program.

The library, now amounting a total of 18,000 volumes, was originally located in separate rooms within the university library building for arts and social sciences, on Augustusplatz in Leipzig. It moved into the main building in 2004, where it is located in the section of English and American studies (*Institut für Anglistik/Amerikanistik*) that contains a total of 35,000 works. At the time of the move the filing system also changed from that of the Library of Congress to that of the *Regensburger Verbundklassifikation* (Regensburg network classification). All of the library's titles are now accessible to internet research via the portal (Web-OPAC) of the university library. The library is opened between 9 am and 9 pm on weekdays, and between 9 am and 5 pm on Saturdays.

Apart from the literature, the Bibliotheca Albertina offers a multitude of modern research tools, the multimedia workstations and internet-terminals being especially noteworthy. Photocopies and printouts of research results can be made in-house. All the technical requirements for scientific research are catered for, allowing both students and teachers to work under optimal conditions.

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VI

A Colorful Combination of Language and Cultural Education: The International Library Magdeburg

"An international visit to the state capital", was the headline of an article which appeared in the Magdeburg press ten years ago. The occasion was the donation of the U.S. military base library of Neckarsulm by ambassador Robert M. Kimmit to the city library of Magdeburg. The creativity of all participants was called upon to find a home for the books. As the Central Library had no room for such a large collection, the books went to the library's adults section, which was then converted into an international library (*Internationale Bibliothek, IB*). The intention was to build a special library to promote foreign languages and culture, and to create support for the integration of foreign citizens. Due to the commitment of the library's staff, especially its director, Mrs. Ines Gonschoreck, who has created a multi-cultural melting pot in the capital of Saxony-Anhalt during the last ten years, this intention did not just stay a concept, but was energetically transformed into a reality.

The library offers 13,000 media units in more than 25 languages

In her recollections of her experiences while on a USIS Program in the United States during the summer of 1993, Mrs. Gonschoreck highlighted the importance of libraries for US citizens: *"I was deeply impressed by a survey, which showed that the best service in the country is that of the libraries... It is also interesting to see how the Americans support their libraries. Even famous actors, athletes or cartoons promote these cultural institutions all over the country."* Visitors to the international library – IB – can see the influence of this experience in her everyday work. Today, the IB, which was successfully integrated into the reopened and modernized central library in 1999, offers 13,000 media units in more than 25 languages and is used by 90,000 visitors, with over 42,000 borrowings a year. As a result of this success, the IB now has its own budget for the acquisition of foreign language media. Programs run for the public and different target groups, especially school students, teachers, and domestic or foreign students, accompanied the development of this special library.

These activities also sparked cooperation between the German-American institutions in Magdeburg, the Steuben-Schurz-Gesellschaft and the Dialog-Zentrum. The concept that developed ten years ago has lost none of its relevance for the present and will form the spirit of the library in the future. The US ambassador to Germany, Daniel R. Coats, emphasized this message in his address to the International Library at its tenth anniversary celebration in February 2002:

"Today it is more important than ever to realize the crucial role of books and literature in the broadening of horizons and the promotion of mutual understanding across borders. The International Library of Magdeburg can be proud of its achievements over the first ten years of its existence. I wish you every success in your work with the community of Magdeburg und in your efforts to further international dialog and understanding."



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US ambassador Daniel R. Coats
in Magdeburg, February 2002

